

CLAUSURE SPEECH OF MR. BETICO CROES ,PRESIDENT OF THE M.E.P. ARUBA.

March 21, 1981.

Sisters and brothers;

We have thus come to the end of this Conference. We have not only been in contact with our friends during the deliberations, but even more importantly we have exchanged opinions and discussed subjects outside the meeting hall.

Four days of Conferences we have been faced with new ideas. Ideas that of course have left an impact. We have met new friends, friends that would be compañeros for all life-time.

Brothers that have the same ideal. The ideal of helping to the improvement of the living conditions of human beings in the world, of eliminating the results of colonialization, of fighting against military regimes, which trap human rights and the right to self determination and democracy etc.

We have made new friends now, friends who are, for the realization of economic and political independence of all peoples. Friends and brothers, who shall be in the vanguard against military aggression in order to struggle against what we have called the negative results of the micro-states.

My friends we chose Social-Democracy, fully aware, from its foundation of the party. And in 1976 we presented our first application to be admitted as a member of this distinguished family.

The process of becoming a member was a very difficult process, I am saying this to-day because to me this is anachronism, one might almost say a contradiction.

Social Democracy struggles for decolonization and the freedom of the people. Yet when one finds oneself in a colonial situation as we are, the representative of the Metropolis in the Socialist International has a decisive role to play. And this was our problem for many years.

Since with full awareness we have chosen Social Democracy and chosen to follow the ideas that in Socialist International our friends hold, we put all efforts forward to convince our friends.

At this moment I should tell you that brothers of our region, such as Carlos Andres Perez of Acción Democrática of Venezuela, Daniel Oduber of the P.L.N. of Costa Rica, Anselmo Sule of the Radical Party of Chile, Paul Miller of the Peoples' National Movement of Jamaica, Aniceto Rodriguez, of the Partido Socialista chileno who is not an official member, but as a brother has always shown his partiality for us, comrade Carlos Morales our brother, member of the radical party of Chile, who was here in Aruba on the 25th of March of 1977 during the Referendum, in all his talks he has always referred to the situation here in Aruba.

We have to thank these friends who have helped us convince the party of the metropolis to accept the Movimiento Electoral di Pueblo, as a member. And I should reiterate at this time that the Secretary General of the Socialist International, who has always been very accessible to us, has cooperated fully with us at all times, he was in favour of our being member, but of course we cannot overlook the fact, that he had a role to play as a Secretary General.

Bernt Carlsson, the Secretary General, should receive our gratitude for his help and support for becoming a member in the Socialist International. Therefore I would like to ask you a very big applause to our comrade, Bernt Carlsson. Comrades we have been discussing in these days very interesting topics like the problems of the micro-states. As I have been told, it is the first time this topic has been a point on the agenda of a meeting, in which participated many exponents of the Caribbean Area.

After this Conference I can assure you that the Movimiento Electoral di Pueblo of Aruba will not be the same party as it was before. With this Conference, after having receiving reports regarding the situation of other islands such as St. Lucia, Grenada, Puerto Rico, Santo Domingo, Haiti, and other islands in the Caribbean, with the independence of Aruba it would not mean that we separate ourselves from the other islands of the Netherlands Antilles, nor the other islands of the Caribbean.

With the sovereignty of Aruba we shall give a guarantee that will ensure close cooperation with other islands of the Caribbean. And I said, and have repeated, when I have taken the floor, we do not accept the metropolis to dictate to us a political structure. We want our freedom. And in the Caribbean we shall than determine on the bases of equality and freedom the way in which we shall cooperate together. That is why I would like to repeat what I said on Wednesday during the inaugural meeting, Brother Maurice Bishop has problem in Grenada, Brother John Odium has his problem in St. Lucia, other brothers of Curacao, Bonaire, Saba, St. Maarten, St. Eustatius and Trinidad, they all have their own problems, but we are just one family. And on the basis of liberty and equality we have to take the initiative and prepare possibilities for cooperation.

We must not let United States, or Holland or England decide on what kind of cooperation we are to have together. That is why I insist on my proposal. In Latin America we have the Parlatino; we can start with a kind of Caribbean Parliament to exchange ideas on our problems. That is why I can come to the conclusion at the end of this Conference and state that we have used our party to convince our people that with freedom it does not mean that we will be cutting the ties completely that we have with our region.

We want close ties of cooperation to exist strongly, in order to obtain more and more guarantees to preserve territory integrity and to decrease the negative effects from the economic point of view when we think on micro-states.

Brothers and sisters, you have honoured us with your presence, you have given us ideas, and encouraged us. You have inspired us and given us the strenght to continue with our struggles. You have also inspired other political people, who have not as yet decided on the political path they must follow for the benefit of their peoples.

There are politicians in the Caribbean who still believe that they want to be colonies, they want to maintain strong colonial ties. What you have done during this Conference is to motivate them to go back home and convince their people that the only happiness can be found in the path of sovereignty and political independence with full cooperation with other sovereign state.

You will return back to your people and I hope that very soon we will be able to organize further meetings like this. We should do Conferences like this more often in Aruba. You will go back home and attempt to improve the situations in your countries. Others have to go in exile, because they live in exile, you will try to strengthen yourself to be able to return to your homeland and establish Democracy, human rights and happiness of your peoples. What we can offer you, Aruba is only an island of 65 thousand inhabitants with scarce economic resources.

The only thing we can offer you is pure solidarity, based on respect for human rights for our peoples and based on respect of human dignity.

We have our symbol, showing that we have celebrated the Tenth Anniversary, (explaining the Aruban flag). It is the freedom of our country. The "lark-spur blue" is the blue of the United Nations which is the aspiration of our people to become politically independent.

With the four pointed star representing the island of Aruba. Why four points, you may ask. The four points are: north, south, east and west, this means that people from abroad came to Aruba to help us build a new society and all the people who have come from abroad to Aruba, at this time form a totally accepted comprehensive part of our people.

We have yellow that represents our sun and some plants that are very characteristic to Aruba " the aloe and kibrahacha".

Why two lines, why not only one,

That symbolizes the fact that Aruba wishes to be independent and at the same time to remain close to other islands, and today we do not wish to remain just as coming closer to the Netherlands Antilles alone, but we stress that we have an ideal, the symbol that Aruba wishes for closer and closer ties with Santa Lucia, Dominica, Santo Domingo, Grenada, Trinidad and all the other islands in the Caribbean .

Brothers and sisters, the symbol of the Movimiento Electoral di Pueblo, Aniceto Rodriguez has commented on it. The bird is opening his wings to seek to bring to Aruba a better future, but Aruba can not survive alone. And in the spirit of solidarity I beg you, not only for the happiness of the people of Aruba, but for the happiness for the people of Curacao, Bonaire, St. Maarten, Saba and St Eustatius and the other peoples of the other micro-states in the Caribbean, we beg you solidarity, give us your solidarity, because without it and mainly from the stronger countries without their solidarity we can not survive.

Hence we feel that this Conference and the fact that with the cooperation of the colleagues they have accept us as member of the Socialist International, now it has been another guarantee that protect and preserve our independence once we have it and will protect our territory integrate and our political independence.

To conclude I would like to apologize for any lack of attention, for the short comes in the organization of this meeting, but it is the first time that our party has organized a Conference of this size. I believe that the second one will be a better one. I hope that you will consider Aruba a headquarter, not only for any kind of Conference you may wish, but headquarter for other organizations or institutions of the Socialist International.

To my friend, brother Maurice Bishop of Grenada, I would say we had problems before this conference, because reactionary fascist forces had attempted to boycott this conference and desqualify the intentions that Maurice Bishop and the New Jewel Movement had been doing for his people in Grenada. After hearing the report from brother Maurice Bishop we have managed to create another opinion of the situation. After having defeated a fascist dictatorship with a corrupt administration, he has been able to prove in a very short time that he is working sincerely for the achievement of social justice for the people of Grenada.

We are social-democrats and as brother Maurice Bishop said that he will, as all parties affiliated to Socialist International, establish a democratic system in his country as he explained during this Conference.

And to all the sisters and brothers and friends who took part in the debate, who have given us information and the situation in their countries my deep gratitude. Not only on behalf of M.E.P., but I can also say on behalf of all the people of Aruba.

In spite of all the criticism from certain media, apart from the fact that certain sectors have attempted to boycott our Conference you saw during the manifestation and last night's bar-b-que, that the people of Aruba is with the Movimiento Electoral di Pueblo.

I think the time has come for me to thank all the people, leaders of the M.E.P., of the press who have shown interest in participating in the Conference. I thank you.

My credit to the trade unions, because here in Aruba there are only two trade unions creating at times the impression that the Movimiento Electoral di Pueblo is not following the right path, but there are twelve trade unions in Aruba and the facts that we have many trade union members present here, trade union members who have participated in this Conference, demonstrates that the M.E.P. is working for the massa of the people, the working massa.

My Secretary General of the Socialist International I would like to tell you that about a month ago you received the telegram from two trade unions, I would like to tell you that these trade unions, or whether that is, they organized in Aruba a demonstration against Mr. Maurice Bishop. That they tried to boycott this Conference telling the people of Aruba that we are of a communist trend. But as you have been able to see they even appealed to the workers here in the hotel, asking them to refuse to give service to us and to you.

But the workers have more trust in the leaders of the Movimiento Electoral di Pueblo did not follow the request of the trade unions and last night they were very happy during the bar-b-que.

On the one hand they say that the M.E.P. how is it possible to become a member of the Socialist International, how can the M.E.P. organize an international conference to deal with the subject for the most marginate sectors of the people they were trying to boycott the Conference. It is a contradiction. Yet in spite of all their attempts to boycott the Conference we can say to-day that it was a complete succes.

I also want to thank the parties that are not affiliated to the Social International. The social-christian democratic parties, and onther parties which wish to become a member and all other parties of the Netherlands Antilles who had come to this Conference.

We thank you very much.

I must state that I am completely contrary to the fact that the political parties of Aruba have not attended this Conference, but as I said last night: "poor politicians, let them live as political dwarfs".

My gratitude to all of you, sisters and brothers, the members of the Socialist International and our sisters and brothers from South America, Central America, Europe and the Caribbean, who have honoured us with your presence, again I thank you.

I would like to conclude:

Long live the Socialist International.

Long live the independence of Aruba.

Long live solidarity among the people of Latin America and the Caribbean.

I thank you.